

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 SP-02 INR-05 PRS-01

USIE-00 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 L-01 H-01

DHA-02 SCA-01 VO-01 INRE-00 /042 W

-----311558Z 006438 /47

O 311508Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2982

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, BU (MAREVA, RUMYANA AND YORDANKA)

SUBJECT: MFA COMPLAINS OF VOA AND OTHER AMERICAN MEDIA TREATMENT
IN MAREV CASE

REF: SOFIA 1144

1. AT CONCLUSION OF INTERVIEW REPORTED REFTEL, KOVACHEV
OBJECTED STRONGLY TO RECENT REPORTING ON MAREV CASE BY VOA,
RFE AND AMERICAN PRESS. HE DREW PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO
FOA BULGARIAN SERVICE BROADCAST 2000 HRS GMT 24 MAY REPORTING
LETTER SENT BY FIFTEEN US CONGRESSMEN TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND
FOREIGN MINISTER MLADENOV. LETTER HAD TERMED GOB HANDLING
OF CASE "VERY CRUEL" AND ACCUSED GOB OF VIOLATING HELSINKI
ACCORDS. "NOTHING COULD BE FARTHER FROM THE TRUTH", SAID
KOVACHEV. "GOB POSITION HAS BEEN CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET.
IT HAS ALWAYS STOOD PREPARED TO ISSUE PASSPORTS WHENEVER
THE MAREVA GIRLS DECLARED THEIR WISH TO VISIT THEIR PARENTS
IN AMERICA, BUT NEVER ON ANY ACCOUNT WILL FORCE CITIZENS
OF BULGARIA TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY AGAINST THEIR WISHES."

2. CHARGE REPLIED HE HAD NOT HEARD VOA BROADCAST

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REFERRED TO AND HAD NOT SEEN LETTER. "NEVERTHELESS
LAST DECEMBER AMBASSADOR ZHELENSKY, THEN HEAD OF CONSULAR
DEPT, INFORMED AMBASSADOR HERZ THAT EVEN IF MAREVA GIRLS
DESIRED TO LEAVE BULGARIA AND JOIN THEIR PARENTS, THIS
WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED." KOVACHEV TURNED VERY PALE AND
SAID THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE, ZHELENSKY COULD NEVER
HAVE SAID SUCH A THING. CHARGE SAID HE PERSONALLY HAD

NOT BEEN PRESENT AT MEETING, BUT AMBASSADOR HERZ IS VERY PROFICIENT AT SHORTHAND AND DURING SUCH INTERVIEWS TAKES COPIOUS VERBATIM NOTES. HIS VERBATIM NOTES SHOW VERY CLEARLY THAT ZHELENSKY INDEED HAD MADE SUCH STATEMENT.

3. CONTINUING, CHARGE SAID MOST IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT GOB HAD NOW PLACED MAREV CASE ON ROAD TO RAPID RESOLUTION AND, IF KOVACHEV REQUESTED IT, CHARGE WAS PREPARED TO RECOMMEND STRONGLY TO DEPT THAT IT BRIEF INTERESTED CONGRESSIONAL GROUP AND PRESS ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS. KOVACHEV SAID HE WAS ABOUT TO MAKE THAT VERY REQUEST. HE HOPED THAT SUCH BRIEFING WOULD INCLUDE "ENTIRE RECORD" OF DIVIDED FAMILY CASES WHICH GOB APPROVED FOR TRAVEL. KOVACHEV OBJECTED PARTICULARLY TO LAST LINE OF VOA BROADCAST WHICH STATED THAT 33 DIVIDED FAMILY CASES UNSOLVED.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: WE HAVE ONLY BULGARIAN TEXT OF VOA BROADCAST IN QUESTION, WHICH REFERS TO LETTER CIRCULATED BY CALIFORNIA CONGRESSMAN ROBERT LAGOMARSINO AND PROVIDES NO OTHER NAMES. BELIEVE IT WOULD INDEED BE ADVISABLE TO BRIEF SIGNERS OF LAGOMARSINO LETTER AND OTHER INTERESTED CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS AS TO LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN MAREV CASE, AND OUR HOPES FOR RESOLUTION IN VERY NEAR FUTURE. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT ALSO SEEMS ADVISABLE TO BRIEF STATE DEPT PRESS CORPS PROVIDED THIS CAN BE DONE IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE ENSUING STORIES DO NOT PORTRAY GOB AS CAVING UNDER DETERMINED USG PRESSURE. WHILE TO A DEGREE THIS IS WHAT IN FACT HAS HAPPENED, IT WILL NOT ASSIST MATTERS (OTHER PENDING CASES AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EVEN THE MAREV CASE ITSELF) TO HAVE THE PRESS SAY SO.

5. FINALLY, BELIEVE IT WOULD BE VERY MUCH IN INTEREST OF ASSISTING SETTLEMENT OF REMAINING DIVIDED FAMILY CASES KNOWN TO US, AND THOSE THAT MAY WELL ENSUE IN FUTURE, IF VOA BULGARIAN SERVICE COULD BE INDUCED TO BROADCAST A REASONED, OBJECTIVE REPORT RE POSITIVE PROGRESS IN SETTTLING DIVIDED FAMILY CASES HERE. BELIEVE SUCH A STORY SHOULD BE PREPARED BY VOA IN CONJUNCTION WITH EUR/EE AND BASED ON OUR SEVERAL RECENT STATISTICAL ANALYSES, INCLUDING SUCH MESSAGES AS SOFIA A-14, SOFIA 0947, 0917, 0720, 0719, ETC.
HERZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PROPAGANDA, REFUGEES, REPATRIATION, ALLEGATIONS, RADIO BROADCASTING, DEPENDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SOFIA01149
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770193-0341
Format: TEL
From: SOFIA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977052/aaaaabif.tel
Line Count: 110
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 765f498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 77 SOFIA 1144
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2376403
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MFA COMPLAINS OF VOA AND OTHER AMERICAN MEDIA TREATMENT IN MAREV CASE
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, BU, US, (MAREVA, RUMYANA), (MAREVA, YORDANKA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/765f498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009